

# **Chapter 6**

## ***Case Study No. 2: Tualatin Commons in Tualatin, Oregon***

**Community Redeveloped**

## Community Redeveloped

*Tualatin lacked a strong identity of its own and was in danger of becoming simply an ordinary suburb--that is, until a combination of circumstances and vision and hard work led to a solution: the development of a central place, a downtown, a civic “living room” on a 19-acre site. This new city center has given Tualatin a unique and positive identity. Its realization testifies to the power of a true public/private partnership.*

**-- Dave Leland<sup>1</sup>**

S. Buntin.

### Community History and Demographics

Tualatin is located 10 miles south of Portland, straddling Interstate 5, which runs from Seattle, through Portland, and south into California.

While the suburban city only has a population of about 19,000 people, its population has grown at an amazing 1,700 percent since 1970, when less than 1,000 people lived there.<sup>2</sup>

Tualatin, which takes its name from the river that meanders along its northern border, is the Atfalati Indian word for “lazy.”<sup>3</sup> Though the region was settled in the 1850s, Tualatin was not incorporated until 1913. Before then, it was called Galbreath and

then Bridgeport (in honor of the bridge that was built to span the Tualatin River, and the toll used to help pay for its construction).

The town was platted in the 1880s after the Portland & Willamette Valley Rail Company built rail lines and a depot. It

**Flowers, promenade, and Villas on the Lake.** R. Shelton.

served as a small center of trade between Tigardville (now Tigard), Smockville (now Sherwood), and Wilsonville, and its biggest draw may have been the fact that it had “the only saloon closer than Oregon City and Portland” for these towns.<sup>4</sup>

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Tualatin grew slowly as a small rural town until the mid-1970s, when it mushroomed into a Portland bedroom community. In addition to the residential growth, however, the city also experienced rapid commercial and industrial development, despite a statewide housing construction slump and recession at the time.

The city has grown in a relatively unplanned manner, with no central business district in a historical sense to call downtown. When the population surged, sprawl development occurred largely unchecked throughout the city.

Tualatin's population is expected to continue its rise at similar growth rates. From 1991 to 1995, for instance, the population in the four-county metropolitan Portland area grew by an additional 110,000 people, and is expected to grow by up to one million more people over the next twenty to thirty years.<sup>5</sup> The majority of this growth will likely be in Tualatin and other suburbs.

In 1990 the median home value was \$95,600, while in 1989 the median household income was \$39,500.<sup>6</sup> The city is not very racially or ethnically diverse, according to 1990 U.S. Census Bureau data:

**Tualatin Population Percentage by Race**

Race	Population
White	96.0%
Asian American	2.0%

African American
American Indian
Other

## Political and Regulatory System

The City of Tualatin has a council-manager form of government, currently managed by City Manager Steven Wheeler. The mayor is Steve Stolze. The seven-member City Council also serves as the Tualatin Development Commission, the redevelopment oversight organization of Tualatin's urban renewal efforts.

Tualatin's City Council is supported by a number of community advisory groups, including the Architectural Review Board, Planning Advisory Committee, and Urban Renewal Advisory Committee, as well as the Economic Development Department and its small staff, directed by Janet Young. This department has direct

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responsibility for overseeing the Tualatin Commons redevelopment project.

In October 1979 the Tualatin City Council adopted a new *Community Plan* which replaced the existing system of Euclidean zoning with a system of “Planning Districts.”<sup>7</sup> The change provided the opportunity for Tualatin to be more flexible in zoning, especially for mixed-use projects.

The city is also a member of the larger regional planning and governance entity of the three-county Portland metropolitan area, called Metro. On behalf of its 24 municipal members (required by law to participate), Metro plans transportation and other vital land use elements including the region’s urban growth boundary. Metro is in the process of developing its *Metro 2040* framework, and sites Tualatin Commons as an example of good local planning and development in municipalities’ “increasing responsibility for implementing the regional growth concept.”<sup>8</sup>

## Initiative for Redevelopment

The Tualatin Development Commission has been working on redevelopment of the site now housing Tualatin Commons since 1975, when it established urban renewal boundaries over a 300-acre area of central Tualatin. Incentive--and frustration--became greater and greater as two attempts by developers failed in the 1980s.

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**Phase II of Tualatin Mews--townhomes, apartments, retail, and plazas--is currently under construction.** Tualatin Development Commission.

Redevelopment of the area was not so much a question of urban decay per se, but rather was instigated to counteract a number of other growing problems, according to the *Tualatin Central Urban Renewal Plan*. These problems include the following:<sup>9</sup>

Deleterious land uses

Lack of flood protection

Lack of adequate drainage facilities and public rights of way

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Traffic congestion and railroad/motor vehicle conflicts and the public safety hazards resulting therefrom

Inaccessibility and inadequacy of public facilities and services

More recently, however, the initiative for redeveloping the area has been both to spur new development, and also to give the relatively centerless City of Tualatin a true civic and commercial downtown.<sup>10</sup> “As with most suburban communities,” says Economic Development Director Janet Young, “Tualatin has no legacy of public gathering places in the core area, no town square, not even an old downtown to start with. The auto-oriented commercial development of the 1970s and 1980s forms the commercial core.”<sup>11</sup>

The need for such a central place was quite evident in the comments received by citizens from a community survey and meetings held in the redevelopment process.<sup>12</sup> “Tualatin needs a classy center that separates us from Beaverton and Tigard,” claimed one resident. “I’d like to see an European-style town or village square... where people could meet for a cup of coffee to play checkers, chess, dominoes, or just visit in a relaxing area without occupying a space that someone is waiting for,” writes another.

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“Tualatin citizens have an opportunity which is very rare in today’s suburbs,” wrote Young in a 1992 *Tualatin Times* editorial, “the chance to shape the center of their city. In most rapidly growing suburbs, prime central locations disappeared long ago to

**Street layout and buildings onsite prior to redevelopment.** Tualatin

Central Urban Renewal Plan.

shopping centers or office parks. Tualatin still has the chance to shape the future of its central city.”<sup>13</sup> Or, as an editorial in the January 25, 1990, *The Oregonian* put it, “Can a city long survive without a heart? . . . When local and regional interests coincide, Tualatin... would acquire the heart that is seen as a necessity for the life of a modern city.”<sup>14</sup>

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### Fostering Sustainability through Redevelopment

The redevelopment's sustainable outcomes can be attributed to four factors: perseverance of the Tualatin Development Commission; leadership of the Economic Development Department and its Director, Janet Young; a strong group of consultants, headed by the Leland Consulting Group; and continual involvement and concern by Tualatin's residents.

When the Tualatin City Council approved its *Central Urban Renewal Plan* in 1975, it also established the Urban Renewal Area. It was not until 1983, however, with release of a report titled *Review and Update of the Urban Renewable Plan*--developed under the citizen-member Urban Renewable Advisory Committee--that a concept for a "Village Square" developed.<sup>15</sup>

Under the Village Square concept, the city offered up to \$12 million in funding for infrastructure and a public square through tax increment financing, in order to bring a developer in who would

redevelop the city's central area.<sup>16</sup>

Between 1985 and 1987, the city purchased a total of 19 acres of land where Tualatin Commons is today. Tax increment financing was the predominant method used to pay for the property.

Between 1986 and 1989, however, the site was tied up with two developers, who sequentially backed out. From 1986 to 1988, Pacific Rim Development Company had an exclusive negotiating agreement with the Development Commission for Village Square, but because the predominantly retail-oriented site was unable to draw large tenants, the developer withdrew.<sup>17</sup> Pan Pacific Development Company then held a similar agreement until 1989, when it backed away for lack of

**The offices are oriented to take advantage of passive solar heating.**

S. Buntin.

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finding any anchor tenants, as well.<sup>18</sup>

During this time, the Development Commission kept the community involved through public meetings. And despite the public's and their own frustrations to convert the site to an adequate and appropriate use, the Development Commission maintained a proactive role and did not simply give the property up to the highest bidder.

Mayor Steve Stolze campaigned for the office of Mayor, in fact, on the agenda of moving the redevelopment forward. "This project is very responsive to what people said they wanted downtown," he said. "This is really the end of a dream for me, or I guess I should say, the dream becoming a reality."<sup>19</sup>

Much of the reason that the Development Commission could keep its balance after 1989 was because of Janet Young and her Economic Development Department, and the Leland Consulting Group, brought in to facilitate development of a new plan--now called Tualatin Commons--that was based on community input, sound principles of pedestrian orientation, and thorough analyses. These processes will be discussed in further detail in a later section.

The primary guidance for the creation of Tualatin Commons was a set of ten objectives developed by the Commission and Economic Development Department based upon

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**A proposed Village Square retail-oriented redevelopment before the Tualatin Commons concept was created.** Benner Stange Assoc.

Architects

a series of public meetings held after the second developer withdrew. These objectives effectively serve as the community's ten principles of sustainable redevelopment:<sup>20</sup>

1. **Provide strong civic focus using public facilities and public spaces.**
2. **Encourage and influence diverse private development.**
3. **Promote pedestrian and vehicular circulation.**
4. **Promote day and night uses for downtown.**



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**The smaller of the two office buildings at Tualatin Commons.**

S. Buntin.

**The Tualatin River runs just north of Tualatin Commons.** S. Buntin.

5. **Create a strong visual impression at major entrances.**

6. **Enhance economic viability for all**

**downtown businesses.**

7. **Provide convenient and adequate parking.**
8. **Establish linkages to other uses downtown and the Community Park.**
9. **Retain retail market share downtown.**
10. **Build a downtown for the long term (50+ years).**

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These objectives were the guiding tenets for the Development Commission, Economic Development Department, and design team in creating the vision of Tualatin Commons. They are supported by the goals of the *Central Urban Renewal Plan*, which has an overall goal “to strengthen the social and economic development of central Tualatin by stabilizing and improving property values, eliminating existing blight, and preventing future blight; to encourage and facilitate land uses, private and public, that result in activity during all business hours, evenings, nights, and weekends; and to encourage indoor and outdoor uses.”<sup>21</sup>

Other *Urban Renewal Plan* goals are divided into five areas, for a total of eleven goals:<sup>22</sup>

#### Land Use

To encourage and facilitate commercial development in the Urban Renewal Area with an emphasis on establishing a visible and viable central business district that encourages community and business activity on weekdays, evenings, and weekends.

To encourage multifamily housing in the Urban Renewal Area as supportive of commercial development.

To promote new industrial development in the southwestern portion of the Urban Renewal Area which is compatible with existing development; and to encourage

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retention and expansion of existing industries in the northern and southwestern portions of the Renewal Area.

To promote civic facilities, including community gathering spaces and other pedestrian amenities, a community center, and a city hall in the central portion of the Urban Renewal Area which is supportive of other civic and private uses in the area.

## **Improved Traffic and Transportation**

To provide transportation access and circulation that is supportive of central area development.

To develop a pedestrian/bicycle system linking the Urban Renewal Area to residential areas, parks, natural areas, and to link the business district on the south side of Boones Ferry Road to the future business district on the north side of Boones Ferry Road.

To support the development of the metropolitan transportation system (Tri-Met) in order to provide alternative transportation modes for the residential and employment population of the Urban Renewal Area.

## **Public Utilities**

To assist in providing public utilities in the Urban Renewal Area as needed to facilitate growth and aesthetic quality.

## **Recreational and Community Facilities**

To provide a high quality park and recreation system to offset the environmental effect of large areas of commercial and industrial development.

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## **Flood Control and Other Public Improvements**

To promote the public health, safety, and general welfare, and to minimize public and private losses due to flood conditions.

To create an aesthetically-pleasing atmosphere in the Urban Renewal Area in order to promote investment and occupancy.

**A courtyard and small pond provide privacy for residents of the Villas on the Lake.** S. Buntin.

These goals serve as overall elements of sustainable redevelopment. However, measurable indicators created for each would allow the community to fully evaluate success in reaching these goals.

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The Tualatin Commons logo is used throughout the redeveloped area, such as on the planter base of this tree. S. Buntin.

Tualatin Commons’s design guidelines were developed in 1993 and are coupled with the city’s standard architectural review requirements. They “provide prospective developers and designers with a checklist of issues that must be addressed in

their development proposals; provide existing businesses with an overall conceptual approach that will enable the actions of independent businesses to be in concert with , and add to the Tualatin Commons plan; and provide the City of Tualatin with a method of evaluating public and private development or redevelopment proposals on a consistent basis.”<sup>23</sup>

For the Tualatin Commons *concept* section of the guidelines, the categories of reinforcing the *Concept Plan*, twenty-four hour use, open space defined by building, buildings as good neighbors, and encouraging further development are addressed.. For *city connections*, axial relationships and monuments, visual linkages, places and connections, driving and parking, and

pedestrian opportunities are addressed. For *civic spaces*, areas of many functions, the street, the intersections, civic rooms, courtyards and plazas, and inside and outside are detailed. For *buildings*, the outside wall, building entrances, the craft of building, and interior working environments are addressed. And for *site specific*, a number of other factors, including urban/rural forms and context, mandatory water features, and materials of construction are detailed.

The concerted efforts of the City Council, Economic Development Department, design team, and perhaps most of all the citizens allowed Tualatin Commons to take an economically, environmentally, and socially successful form. Their efforts demonstrate three lessons, according to Janet Young:<sup>24</sup>

Give people priority over cars

Demand high quality of yourselves and others

Be a true partner with the private sector

One of Tualatin Commons’s many public spaces. S. Buntin.

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Summary of Redevelopment

Though the Tualatin Development Commission created a 300-acre redevelopment district at the center of town in 1975 to solve infrastructure problems, create a public parking district, and “create a ‘Village Square’ development which would form the heart of the city,”<sup>25</sup> it wasn’t until 18 years later that the City of Tualatin actually broke ground on the 19-acre Tualatin Commons, a mixed use

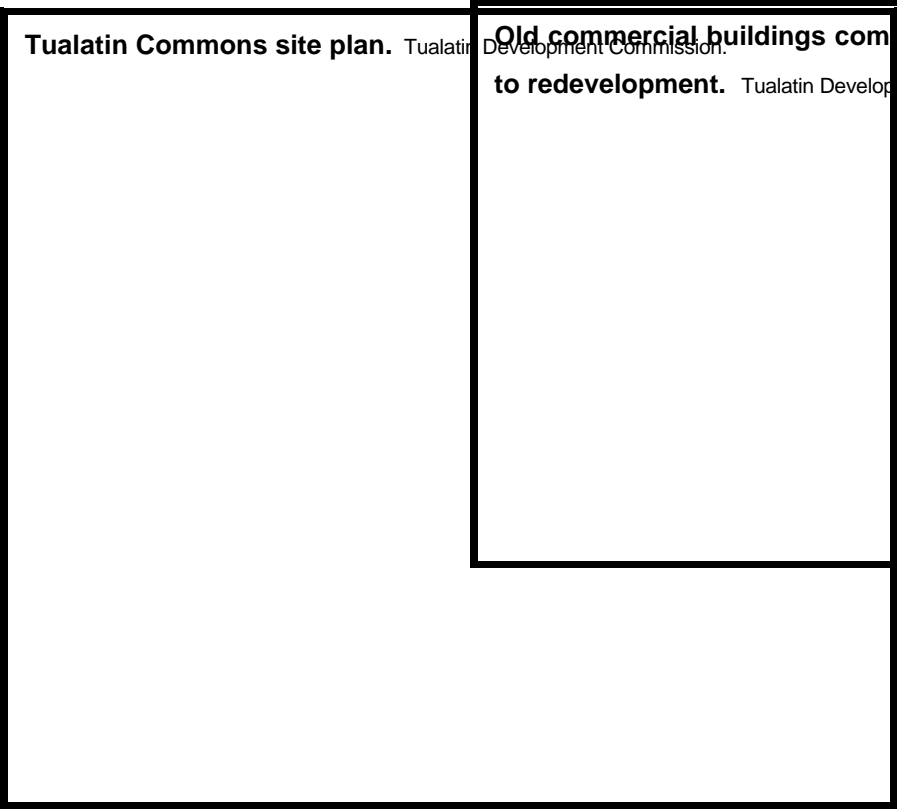
redevelopment comprised of office buildings, rowhouses, a hotel, work/live units called hofices, restaurants, and a public plaza and promenade surrounding a manmade lake.

The largest use before redevelopment was the non-conforming Hervin Blue Mountain Dog Food factory, which operated with a noticeably unpleasant odor until 1987.<sup>26</sup> In that year, it was sold to a competing pet food corporation

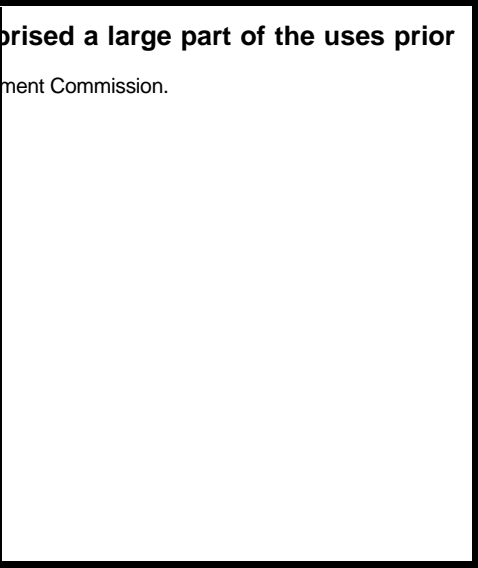
which purchased the trademark and inventory but left ownership of the buildings and equipment to Hervin’s parent company. Production was indefinitely halted shortly thereafter.

A number of older, dilapidated buildings--including a Dairy Queen, old houses converted to various uses such as an auto parts store and small engine repair shop, and a few older residences--were also onsite. Other uses included the Tualatin Valley Fire District building, and an old warehouse temporarily being used to

Tualatin Commons site plan. Tualatin Development Commission.



Old commercial buildings comprised a large part of the uses prior to redevelopment. Tualatin Development Commission.



house the city’s Police Services Department. At the time, the entire site was also from three to

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six feet below the 100-year floodplain.

Between 1985 and 1987 the city purchased the property under the auspices of the Tualatin Development Commission, relocating the businesses and residents as required by Oregon law.

After failed attempts at redeveloping the site, the city decided to undertake the redevelopment process itself by first creating a site plan based on community and design team input, and then dividing the site into seven parcels for private purchase. These parcels were offered adjacent to city-developed public spaces: a lake, public plaza, and promenade. Redevelopment of five of the parcels is now complete, construction progresses on the sixth, and the seventh remains available.

### ***The Lake of the Commons***

The heart of the project, which both physically (in its human-heart shape) and symbolically is also the heart of the city, is the Lake of the Commons, a 3.1-acre permanent body of water constructed to satisfy a number of criteria.<sup>27</sup> Because the entire site was several feet below the floodplain, excavated soil from its construction provided fill for the rest of the site. This greatly reduced the amount of imported fill needed to raise surrounding construction sites above floodplain levels. It also serves as a catch basin in times of heavy flooding along the Tualatin River.

The lake creates a “ring of value” for private parcels surrounding the site, especially along its north side, which a market

**Landscaping and public spaces adjacent to the Lake of the Commons are key to Tualatin’s new city center.** R. Shelton.

analysis concluded was a “weak” draw for redevelopment.<sup>28</sup> The lake therefore becomes an automatic amenity--the “anchor”--for developers seeking to reduce risk and enhance aesthetic appeal and marketability of developments, encouraging uses which might not

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otherwise locate in a typical suburban downtown area.

According to Janet Young, the lake and surrounding

**The main plaza's fountain is decorated with tile crawfish, the unofficial symbol of a redeveloping Tualatin.** R. Shelton.

promenade and plazas that are an integral part of the site are large enough to be welcoming to the entire community, but also compact enough to allow for and promote a successful business environment. Not only does the lake attract residents who want a central public space for social, recreational, and other reasons, but just as importantly, it also attracts business.

Finally, the three-acre lake replaced two acres of city streets, substituting asphalt for water and therefore reducing onsite impervious surfaces, traffic congestion, and auto emissions.

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**The Lake of the Commons, with office building and restaurants behind it.** S. Buntin.

The lake itself holds six million gallons of water, and ranges from between six to eighteen inches deep at the edges, to nine feet in the center. The water lost from evaporation is replaced by onsite wells, which at one time produced the original city water supply. It has been designed as a closed system, and treated wastewater from a treatment plant north of the Tualatin River--which itself is only a half-mile north of Tualatin Commons--may be used in the future.

Lake maintenance costs range from \$10,000 to \$30,000 per year, nearly identical to those for maintaining the previous streets.

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### *Promenade, Public Plaza, and Community*

**An architect's sketch of the Century Hotel, with the Lake of the Commons, bell tower, and offices in the background.** The Tualatin

Times.

### ***Center***

The Lake of the Commons is surrounded by a wide promenade lined with brick pavers, street furniture, and lush landscaping. It links the lake to the residences, restaurants, and offices, as well as to pathways between buildings which lead to landscaped parking lots, adjacent buildings, and the 28-acre Community Park abutting the north side of Tualatin Commons. It is adorned with public art--discussed in detail later in this section--and includes a blue and white railing that circles the lake in a fixed roll of gentle waves.

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Directly west of the lake is the other centerpiece of the Commons, a 20,000-square-foot public plaza. At its center is a large, ground-level fountain paved with a ring of 14-foot long, red ceramic tile crawfish over a waving design of blue tiles. At the fountain's edges are a series of jets which shoot balls of water when large buttons are pushed. An open air colonnade is located adjacent to the fountain, hosting festival events, markets, and other activities.

A clock tower is planned as a public arts project on the main plaza, and will be the object of focus for major lines of sight within the Commons. Construction should be initiated by the end of 1999, assuming funds are raised.

A community center has also been designed into the site plan for the area just north of the public plaza. If constructed, it would likely house the Tualatin Chamber of Commerce and public facilities such as conference rooms. However, it may not be built because the lot was planted with grass and has become a popular area with residents. "If you want to develop a site," says Janet Young, "don't put a nice and accessible lawn on it."<sup>29</sup>

### ***Century Hotel***

A market analysis conducted by the Leland Consulting Group--Tualatin's lead consultant contracted to recommend options for the property and manage the process--determined that

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while the national market for hotels was weak, the southwest metropolitan Portland market was strong, especially for Tualatin.<sup>30</sup> Based on this recommendation, the Development Commission decided to pursue a hotel for the Commons because hotels provide around-the-clock activity, support restaurant uses, provide high taxable value, and support local businesses through guest spending.<sup>31</sup> The Century Hotel, a 40-room suites hotel with rooms that overlook the promenade and lake, opened in the spring of 1994.

### ***Office Buildings and Restaurants***

A total of 87,000 square feet of office space in two “Class A” office buildings provide local business and employment opportunities. Onsite office buildings also provide the opportunity for residents in the rowhouses and forthcoming condominiums and apartments to have close access to work. Additionally, office uses support the onsite restaurants and utilize shared parking, reducing the overall number of parking spaces needed for the site.

In the Development Commission’s and consultant’s opinions,

**Tualatin Commons’s larger office building (back middle) and Century Hotel (right) front the lake promenade.** S. Buntin.

office space is necessary to literally provide a working downtown center, as well as to provide beneficial tax revenue for the city.

Tualatin Commons also includes two restaurant parcels, both at the south end of the lake, adjacent to the hotel and office buildings. Currently, a three-tenant restaurant occupies the site just south of the public plaza, while the lot for another restaurant adjacent to the hotel is still available.

While there is no retail onsite now, excluding restaurants, the second phase of the “Tualatin Mews” mixed-use development will include some ground-level service retail.

### ***Residential Uses***

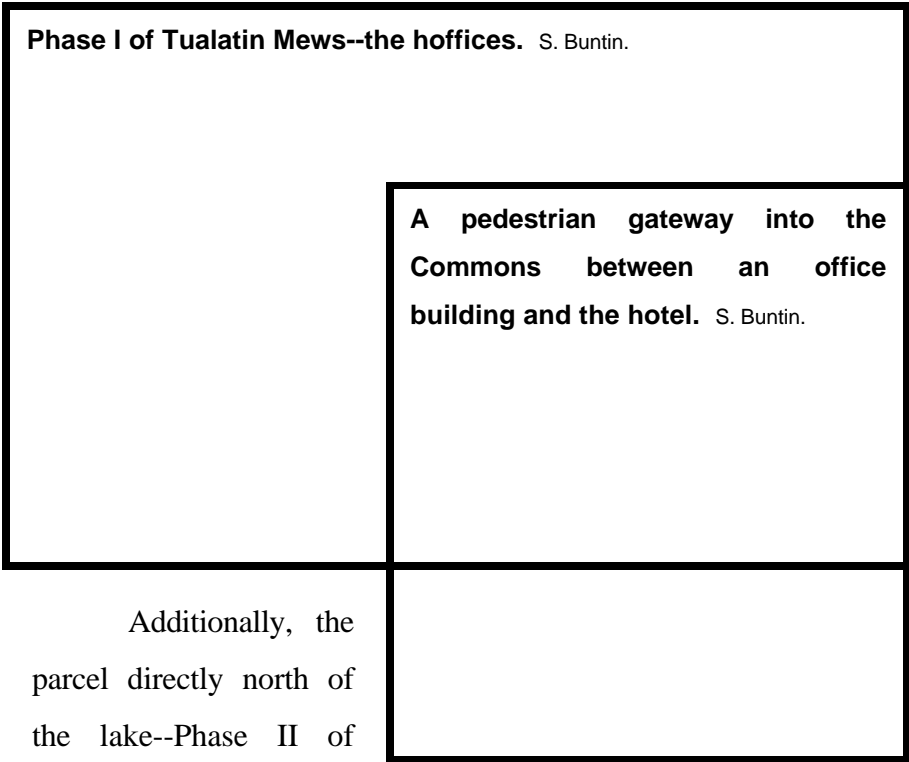
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There are currently two built residential projects, and a third under construction. Perhaps the most interesting is the Tualatin Mews *hoffices* project--an owner-occupied, mixed-use development in which the first floor, street level, is comprised of commercial space (generally office, retail, or gallery), and two levels of living space are set above. Leland’s market analysis showed that the number of home workers is increasing nationally by over a million people per year, representing a full 25 percent of the national labor force.<sup>32</sup> The seven-unit hoffices building provides a valuable mixed-use live/work opportunity for residents, which currently include a jewelry-maker with a gallery and a software developer with a home office. Additionally, the hoffices utilize passive solar energy through their southern orientation.

Other residential projects include high-end rowhouses in the northwest section of the Commons, surrounding a small, landscaped pond. Eighteen rowhouses are complete as Phases I and II of “Villas on the Lake,” and 24 market-rate apartments or additional rowhouses are scheduled for Phase III construction soon.



Additionally, the parcel directly north of the lake--Phase II of Tualatin Mews--is under construction now, and will include 12 moderate-rent apartments and 15 moderate-rent townhomes (with at

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least six at the lower end of the rent scale) situated over 8,000 square feet of retail space that will include such tenants as a travel agency, ice cream shop, and coffee house.<sup>33</sup> This parcel will include a promenade-level public plaza and fountain and a second-level private plaza for apartment residents with landscaping that is designed to “create an urban resort atmosphere.”<sup>34</sup> Project density is 36 units per acre.

Public Art

Tualatin’s Development Commission and citizens have placed a large emphasis on public art at the Commons. The Tualatin Art Committee received a grant from the regional Metropolitan Arts Commission in 1993 to develop a five-year plan for public art at Tualatin Commons. It has been developed and is currently being implemented.<sup>35</sup> “Art can make all the difference about how people feel about the Commons and their city,” acknowledged Consuelo Underwood, the art consultant hired by the city to develop and implement the plan.<sup>36</sup>

- Art projects are divided into five categories:<sup>37</sup>
- Small art features, including a memorial commemorating historical Tualatin, a dedicated area for citizen contributions, and artist-designed utility vault lids.
- Landscaping and lighting, including flower planters designed by artists, a small plaza designed by an artist, a

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<p><b>The Villas on the Lake rowhouses.</b> S. Buntin.</p>	
	<p><b>An artist-designed entrance at the eastern edge of Tualatin Commons.</b> S. Buntin.</p>
<p>“surprise” in paving or cement, and artist-created quotations in pavement.</p> <p>Major artwork, including artwork at main intersections of adjacent streets, the clock tower on the main plaza, a sculpture garden, and art or gallery space within private developments--such as one of the office buildings--onsite.</p> <p>Linkages, including artist-designed pedestrian linkages to nearby streets, the library, and Community Park.</p>	

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Temporary art.

The city appointed a graphic artist to design a logo from ten concepts identified by the Development Commission, and the logo adorns all of the marketing materials as well as drain covers, street furniture, banners, signage, and other items.<sup>38</sup> The first art project completed under the new plan was a series of 61 artist-designed banners which hung from ornamental light fixtures throughout the site during its May 1994 dedication.<sup>39</sup>

Other public art includes a history of Tualatin imbedded in brick pavers in the small plaza located between the unbuilt restaurant site and the smaller office building; drinking fountains cast in glass with water urn shapes visible at their cores and embedded reflective glass icons taking on different colors as the light of the day changes; the ceramic tiles of the main plaza; a large, stone circular planter which announces Tualatin Commons and greets visitors arriving from the west via Nyberg or Tualatin-Sherwood Roads; and the wave-shaped railing surrounding the lake.

Environmental and Cultural Redevelopment Efforts

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A primary responsibility of Tualatin Commons is to adequately integrate itself with the surrounding built and natural

Granite etched with the history of Tualatin is woven throughout one of the smaller plazas. S. Buntin.	An artistically inspired drinking fountain on the promenade. S. Buntin.
Paddle boats are popular on the lake in summer. R. Shelton.	

neighborhoods, providing an excellent example of community space and architecture for adjacent built environments. The lake and open spaces also provide a link between the various unbuilt open spaces and greenways surrounding the renewed town center, especially for pedestrians wishing to move either directly from the Commons or points south, to Community Park and the river to the north.

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The physical redevelopment of Tualatin's downtown has also enhanced the redevelopment of social, cultural, and recreational opportunities. The Commons hosts a number of festivals and social events, especially during the summer months. The largest is the annual Tualatin Crawfish Festival, which attracts thousands of Pacific Northwest residents and includes live entertainment and music, Historical Society mini-museum, parade, dance, and pancake breakfast (not necessarily in that order).<sup>40</sup> The Commons also hosts the Tualatin farmer's market each Saturday morning from the beginning of June through the end of October. And a Friday evening concert series runs from mid-July through the end of August, including jazz, instrumental, big band, and traditional African music, as well as a childrens concert.

Tualatin Commons and the lake especially provide a variety of recreational opportunities. During the summer months, a vendor rents paddle boats while hobbyists enjoy captaining radio-controlled boats across the water. Though no swimming is allowed in the lake, children and adults alike are encouraged to frolic in the water of the main plaza's crawfish fountain. Other residents and visitors picnic, stroll, and otherwise take advantage of the public open spaces.

## Redevelopment Process

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Though redevelopment of the overall area began with

**The crawfish fountain.** R. Shelton.

implementation of the *Central Urban Renewal Plan* in 1975, and continued with initiation of the Village Square concept in 1986, the redevelopment process that resulted in Tualatin Commons fundamentally began--or began again--in 1989, after Pan Pacific Development Company could not form or implement a workable plan.

The earlier proposals failed primarily because they were retail-dominated, refusing to take into account the influence of

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close-by, larger retail centers.<sup>41</sup> Both developers spent many months

**The Crawfish Festival is a popular summertime event.** R. Shelton.

negotiating with stores and changing site plans, but to no avail. Pan Pacific, in fact, ultimately changed its plan to a grocery store-anchored strip mall, which met considerable resistance from the Development

Commission, Economic Development staff, Urban Renewal Advisory Committee, and citizens. Everyone agreed that Tualatin did not need another strip mall, but rather a true city center for all residents.

Instead of hoping for one developer who would come up with a conceptual plan that would be everything the city and its residents wanted--a seemingly impossible request--the Development Commission decided to take the site and its possibilities fully to the general public. In January 1990, over 200

residents showed up for a Commission meeting to discuss the site's future.

The city had three options: (1) attempt to redevelop the site again with a new developer; (2) evaluate alternative ways to develop an identifiable core area; (3) sell the land to the highest bidder but retain the usual Architectural Review Board and zoning control over the resulting development.<sup>42</sup>

Residents who attended the meeting were overwhelmingly in support of the second option--having the city slip into the role of developer, working with a good design team on creation of a plan, and then working with the private sector in developing portions of the site. As one citizen said, summing up the residents' reasoning, "We have plenty of places to shop, give us places to go."<sup>43</sup>

From that meeting, the Development Commission established two goals.<sup>44</sup> First, it committed to placing a higher priority on creating civic spaces. Second, it maintained its focus on long-term taxable value of the land, realizing that a good design might take time to completely sell to developers.

Working with the Economic Development Department, the Commission then decided to "focus on sites which could be sold off to multiple developers, rather than having the fate of the entire site tied up with one developer," says Young.<sup>45</sup>

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The first step for the Economic Development Department, which was charged with heading up redevelopment, was assembling a quality team of consultants to create a plan. The Leland Consulting Group was brought on board, and in June 1992 developed a market analysis, development program, and financial analysis for the site.<sup>46</sup> In November of that year, a transportation analysis was also conducted.<sup>47</sup> The city gave the consulting team a number of directives in developing a preliminary concept plan: make it implementable as quickly as possible, make it realistic in the day's real estate market, have it contain a balance of public and private uses, do not let it include another strip shopping center, and make it consistent with the ten citizens' objectives.<sup>48</sup>

Based on the design team's analysis, Leland proposed a number of uses, based around a public lake that would alleviate floodplain problems and serve as an economic, cultural, and recreational amenity. Other proposals included office buildings, specialty boutique/business hotel, two or three regional or national chain restaurants, new city hall, owner-occupied housing, hofices, enhancement of surrounding buildings, an extensive lakefront walkway system, public plazas and lawns, and public parking for existing and new businesses. The majority of these suggestions made it into the final site plan, which itself is somewhat flexible based on developers and the market. The consulting team also

tested each design concept against the ten objectives, ensuring selected concepts met the criteria.

A number of site plans were developed in the process of refining Tualatin Commons. However, once a close-to-final plan was developed, incorporating the lake at its center, the Development Commission set up three ground rules for the Economic Development Department and the consulting team to

**Phase I of the Villas on the Lake was the first residential project completed at Tualatin Commons.** S. Buntin.

follow in getting developers to buy into the site:<sup>49</sup>

Three of the seven development parcels had to be committed before construction of the Lake of the Commons could start.

The city's construction budget for public improvements could not exceed \$4.8 million.

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Office building and restaurant along the promenade. S. Buntin.

Construction had to begin by the summer of 1993.

The Commission approved the preliminary plan based upon these contingencies in July 1992.

Though the city had offered up to \$12 million in infrastructure and related funding for prior redevelopment proposals, the city now limited itself to \$4.8 million--the estimated amount of public construction costs--primarily because it was unsure whether further tax increment financing was allowed under Oregon's new Measure 5, which puts a cap on the millage rate that can be earmarked for municipal and educational services.<sup>50</sup> This forced the Development Commission to mandate that the project be constructed from funds available in the general reserve accounts, rather than issuing new bonds. Land sale revenues, since

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the city already purchased the land before 1988, were estimated at just under \$3 million, leaving a net public development cost of roughly \$2 million.<sup>51</sup>

Original land acquisition costs were just under \$4.4 million. The land was purchased through tax increment bond sales and a loan. By 1992, the Tualatin Development Commission had enough funds on hand from previous tax increment collections to construct Tualatin Commons without the need to raise additional funds, so no efforts were taken.

In addition to the Urban Renewal Advisory Committee, a citizens' group called Tualatin Futures played a large part in helping move Tualatin Commons along, by advocating a livable downtown. The group formed in 1992 and worked diligently from then until after the ground-breaking ceremony in July 1993 in support of the proposal. It helped the city combat a small but vocal group of opponents who believed the free market should do with the land as it may, and that a strip shopping mall would be a more appropriate use.

Citizens played a role in the redevelopment process in other ways, as well. In the fall of 1992, the city held a poster contest for students from the three local elementary schools, asking them what they would like to see at Tualatin Commons.<sup>52</sup> Ideas ranged from a parade with a water fountain, to a young swimmer on an inflatable

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mattress, to a gigantic candy store supported on one side by a Chinese restaurant, and on the other by a pizza parlor.

Older students from Tualatin High School led a campaign to sell Tualatin Commons ball caps, t-shirts, and sweatshirts with the Commons logo as both a marketing ploy and a fundraiser for student government activities.<sup>53</sup>

Marketing, in fact, has played a significant role in the redevelopment process. An advertising and public relations firm was hired both to keep the public informed and assess community attitudes, and to get information out to prospective developers.<sup>54</sup> While press releases, a press kit, media interviews, flyers, and articles in the city's newsletter kept local citizens and business owners informed, mailings were sent to introduce the project to a list of potential bankers, real estate brokers, and developers. Additionally, project updates came out on a regular basis, and market studies were used to determine the best uses for individual parcels.

Yet marketing was hampered by the fact that, though a preliminary site plan was developed and the Development Commission gave tentative approval, the city still had to meet the Commission's three criteria.<sup>55</sup> The Economic Development Department was unsure, despite its and the team's efforts, whether the project would actually go forward.

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But the marketing was successful enough to secure the sale

**Most neighboring uses are typical strip mall-type commercial developments.** S. Buntin.

or commitment of six of the seven private parcels in less than one year.<sup>56</sup> Four parcels, in fact, had letters of intent by the Commission's deadline, even though the Commission had publicly acknowledged that it could be five or more years before all of the parcels would sell, especially in a time when the real estate climate in the metropolitan Portland area was relatively poor.<sup>57</sup>

Construction on the public portion of the site began after the ground-breaking ceremony in early July 1993. The ceremony was jointly sponsored by the Development Commission and the Tualatin Futures civic group, was hosted by Mayor Stolze, and included an old-fashioned town social onsite during the warm summer day.



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Construction of the lake, promenade, and public plaza were completed in the spring of 1994, as were the first two private projects--Century Hotel and the first phase of the Villas on the Lake rowhouses.

## Barriers to Implementation

According to Economic Development Director Janet Young, there were five primary barriers to implementation of Tualatin Commons.<sup>58</sup> During the height of activity for the market analysis--in 1991 and 1992--the commercial real estate climate was very poor. Moving forward with the proposal therefore carried the formidable risk that since many of the proposed uses were commercial office buildings, restaurants, and the hotel, the lots possibly would not sell, or at least not in the time frame imposed by the Commission. However, public ownership of the land allowed the city to consider uses over a longer buildout horizon because it did not have the same costs--such as interest on the purchase of the land--as private developers would. Fortunately, this never became an issue because

**Where auto traffic stops and pedestrian traffic begins and continues: an entrance to Tualatin Commons.** S. Buntin.

the lots were sold quickly.

In early 1992, the Oregon Supreme Court upheld a ruling that found that tax increment financing--the mechanism used in the 1980s to purchase much of the land--is subject to the limitations of the state's Measure 5. Considerable uncertainty existed for the city as to how the ruling would affect Tualatin Commons, forcing the city to reduce its monetary investment.

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Tualatin Commons also faced a small but persistently vocal opposition group that had three primary objections: (1) that the project should be voted on by the entire resident population and not solely by the Development Commission, which is comprised of elected representatives; (2) that the site did not need expenditure of public funds; and, (3) that it had already taken too long to redevelop the area.<sup>59</sup> In fact, the opposition mounted referendum attempts twice to halt progress, but both times the referenda did not make it to the voters for administrative reasons. “The problem,” said one resident, “is the state is in economic collapse. Everyone wants a restraint on public spending and then they bring up a massive project like this, which is unequaled in the state.”<sup>60</sup> “There is a lot of frustration over the fact that we’ve had the land for seven years and nothing has happened and nothing is going to happen soon,” said another only one year before ground-breaking.<sup>61</sup>

Fortunately, the initiation of Tualatin Futures in 1992 helped to effectively combat opposition, as residents worked with the Development Commission and consultants in educating other citizens and insisting upon good design and practical, long-term uses.

As with many projects, time--or the lack thereof--was also a major challenge. The time allotted by the Commission for design

creation and preparation of construction documents was quite short. The concept for the Lake of the Commons emerged in late summer 1991, and after market analysis, the Commission approved the idea less than a year later, mandating that construction begin no

**Lush landscaping creates a more natural environment and helps integrate Tualatin Commons--and the larger office building--into the surrounding neighborhood.** S. Buntin.

later than a

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year from then--in July 1993. The Tualatin Commons plan was refined in the fall of 1992, and construction documents were completed the following spring. All in all, the process from Development Commission approval to ground-breaking occurred in less than one year.

Finally, long-term marketing has been a considerable challenge. While a marketing firm was hired to help educate the citizens, as well as to provide information to potential developers and lenders, after most of the parcels were sold, the firm was released.

But Janet Young speaks of the need for continuing marketing in a more resident-oriented manner.<sup>62</sup> While a number of festivals, for example, have been scheduled to take place at the Commons, summer use by a wide range of residents is not as extensive as Young believes it could, or should, be. The Economic Development Department has seen a reduction in its small staff, and no staff resources have been available to increase marketing efforts among potential users of the public spaces. After completion of the public spaces in 1994, moreover, the Tualatin Futures group largely went away. Young would like to see a similar group continue to promote the Commons.

## Measuring Success

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The Tualatin Development Commission does not utilize indicators of sustainability which would help it measure economic, environmental, and social success, even though the design team

**Main plaza, lake, and office building.** S. Buntin.

compared proposals to the ten citizens objectives during the redevelopment process. However, redevelopment efforts to date still appear to be successful in many ways.

The primary measure of success for the city has been the rapid rate with which the private development parcels have been sold and consequently constructed. In addition to the beneficial

## Community Redeveloped

increased taxes from commercial and residential uses, the buildings add to the three distinguishing features of the Commons project, according to Dave Leland: urban scale, urban form, and pedestrian orientation.<sup>63</sup>

Another measure of success is the combination of resulting uses and overall design compared with the preliminary site plan. Because the conceptual plan was relatively flexible and allowed developers to submit proposals based on the public spaces, their experience, and the current market, a fairly large variety of buildings--though not necessarily uses--could have been constructed. But even the building shapes closely resemble those sketched out in the conceptual plan, though the design team did not participate in any physical design or architecture on behalf of private developers.

Economically, Tualatin Commons has been a bit more of a success for the office buildings (which are 100 percent leased), residential units (which are 100 percent sold or rented), and hotel (which attains predicted occupancy levels and has increasing numbers of local businesses using its conference rooms) than the three restaurants currently onsite. A previous restaurant already went out of business--though Young confirms it was primarily because the food was not good.<sup>64</sup> Other restaurants hope to increase business as the second phase of Tualatin Mews is

constructed, and as more and more citizens make a habit of frequenting their new city center, even though restaurants are well known for being risky business ventures.<sup>65</sup>

Another economic measure of success is the fact that the city was able to construct the infrastructure and other public aspects of the

Commons

without having to raise additional revenue--after

land sales achieving a net public cost of only \$2 million.<sup>66</sup>

The private developments,

however, have a total projected value of over \$22

million, about \$1

million more than was initially estimated.<sup>67</sup> That amount is more than \$8 million higher than projected taxable value if the Commons were developed based only on private market processes.<sup>68</sup>

**Native landscaping and a rough pathway help separate the more natural eastern side of Tualatin Commons from the more active western side.** S. Buntin.

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Additionally, several public construction items actually cost less than they were projected at, resulting in a \$264,000 savings in parking lot costs and a \$185,000 reduction in the cost of landscaping.<sup>69</sup>

The site has proven to be successful to private developers for a number of reasons.<sup>70</sup> The initial price of the land was competitive with similar property in the surrounding area, but included the lake as an amenity. Developers could wait to come up with money to purchase the parcels until the design process was completed, saving property-carrying charges. Additionally, the city streamlined the public approvals process to allow developers who met the conceptual plan and design guidelines to purchase the lots in a more time- and cost-effective manner. The city also provided all necessary infrastructure, again reducing costs for developers.

The site is highly visible, with 30,000 cars passing by daily. Though the market was poor in 1991 and 1992, it was on an upswing in 1993, and there was growing market opportunity in nearly every sector. And, while private financing restrictions had placed much commercial construction on hold for several years, the demand continued to grow--and Tualatin Commons effectively tapped into that demand.

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The project has been environmentally successful, as well, and major environmental benefits have resulted from the redevelopment. First, the noticeably repulsive odor of the pet food

factory has been eliminated. Second, two acres of impervious streets and their associated traffic, noise, and automobile emissions have been replaced by a three-acre lake. In fact, traffic volume has been reduced by 40

percent in the Commons area compared to standard retail and prior uses.<sup>71</sup> And third, the lake has alleviated the historic problem of the area being below the 100-year floodplain. In constructing the lake, fill was used to raise the surrounding parcels to higher levels. Additionally, in demolishing the buildings, concrete was recycled into the lake walls and promenade and public plaza walkways.

**The Century Hotel.** S. Buntin.

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Social measurements of sustainability are not being taken in a quantitative sense, but the redevelopment appears to be successful in this aspect, as well. The large public arts program has increased the aesthetic quality of the site, and since a portion of the art displays are always changing, they provide new and exciting sensory experiences for residents and visitors as they return again and again. Perhaps the largest real measure of success is the fact that Tualatin now has a city center which has created a sense of pride in the community. “I think it will have a much bigger impact than just the 20 acres,” says a member of the Development Commission. “We are going to see almost a renaissance occurring outside the boundaries of the project [because of Tualatin Commons]. But it’s going to start slow.”<sup>72</sup>

Within the Commons, however, a renaissance has already taken place, giving the centerless Tualatin a heart, and giving its residents reasons to fill their own hearts with a sense of pride and joy. “It is one of the most exciting things in my life,” said an original member of the Urban Renewal Advisory Committee. “We could see it coming. Here was an opportunity to make a place where people can feel that the community belongs to them, a community made up of people who live and work there.”<sup>73</sup>

**The seal of the City of Tualatin, and Tualatin Commons’s logo.**

Tualatin Development Commission.

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### *Tualatin Commons Sustainable Redevelopment Matrix*

<i>Properties</i>	Yes	No	Notes
High-density, mixed-use core			1
Pedestrian orientation			2
Transit orientation			3
Regionalized architecture, site design, and landscaping			4
Public spaces			5
Protection, restoration, and enhancement of the natural environment			6
Energy efficiency and renewable energy use in buildings			7
“Green” construction			8
Integrated solid and toxic waste minimization			9
Water and wastewater reduction and reuse			10
Local production of goods, including food			11
Affordable housing			12
Building reuse and historic preservation			13
Integration with surrounding neighborhoods			14

### ***Notes from Matrix***

1. The rowhouses, hofices, and Phase II of Tualatin Mews townhomes and apartments on the north end of the Commons are all high-density. The hofices are within-unit mixed use, while the townhomes and apartments will sit above retail or office uses.

2. The entire redevelopment area is pedestrian-oriented, though adequate provisions are made for the automobile, as well. Pedestrian orientation is facilitated through the promenade, pathways, street furniture, landscaping, separated parking lots, and others.
3. While the Commons is not transit-oriented in the sense that the redevelopment is oriented around a transit stop, there is local and regional bus service provided through a stop on the east edge of redeveloped area.

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4. Regionalized architecture is represented in the offices, hotel, and other buildings which use brick similar to other buildings in Tualatin. Regionalized site design is attained through the lake, which serves to alleviate the site's prior sub-floodplain problems. Regionalized landscaping includes local, low-maintenance species.
5. Public spaces are ensured through the lake, promenade, pathways and passageways, green spaces, and others.
6. Environmental preservation occurs by the replacement of streets with the lake, and by increased landscaping compared to prior uses.
7. Energy efficiency and renewable energy use does not go above the state requirements, which are quite strict. However, the offices utilize passive solar energy through southern orientation. There is no renewable energy use onsite.
8. "Green" construction includes recycled concrete and other materials from previous buildings into the lake walls and promenade, and salvaged materials from removed buildings.
9. Tualatin promotes an extensive solid waste recycling program, and meets stringent Oregon state toxic waste disposal requirements.
10. Water for the lake is provided through a closed-loop system, ensuring stormwater does not contaminate it, and reducing the amount of water needed to keep it full.
11. The offices currently provide some production of goods, including jewelry and software. These are minor elements, however.
12. Currently, no affordable housing is provided onsite. The Phase II Tualatin Mews townhomes and apartments now under construction will provide limited affordable purchase and rent opportunities, however.
13. There is no building adaptive reuse or historic preservation onsite, because no buildings warranted saving, though concrete and other items were salvaged, recycled, and reused where possible (see "Green" construction).
14. Integration with surrounding neighborhoods is ensured by community involvement and detailed design guidelines. Buildings, the lake, parking lots, and pathways are successfully integrated into surrounding areas.

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